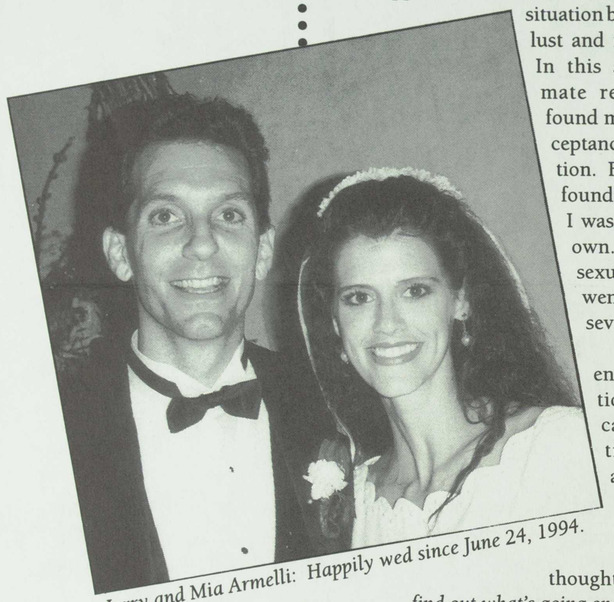
glance, a word, or a touch to tell me I'm acceptable to you.

When I was eleven, an older boy molested me. It wasn't violent, but more of a seduction. This happened several times. Eventually this situation birthed mutual lust and false comfort. In this sexually-intimate relationship I found my place of acceptance and validation. Finally, I had found a place where I was "one of their own." This secret sexual relationship went on for almost seven years.



Jerry and Mia Armelli: Happily wed since June 24, 1994.

Toward the end of this relationship, I became very attracted to another guy my own age. *I want to sleep with him,* I thought. *But I've got to find out what's going on with me before I do something I'll regret for the rest of my life.*

So I went on a quest for truth. "God," I prayed, "if it's okay to 'go gay,' then I'll do it. If not, then I won't." I went to see a professional counselor. I talked with my parents. I visited gay bars and parties, talking with men involved in gay relationships. I also talked with people who had never struggled with homosexuality. I talked with religious people. I heard a variety of opinions on whether or not homosexuality was okay.

But I saw something for myself during my search: Many people involved in the "gay life" were miserable. I realized that giving in to my homosexual desires was not going to bring the happiness and satisfaction I craved. For the first time ever, suicidal thoughts sounded attractive. Memories of the molestation and the emotions of my seven-year relationship plagued me. I fell into depression.

"Jesus was the first man I trusted not to hurt me. And He gave me the power to face my past."

A spiritual mentor recommended a small Catholic prayer group as a means of help. I attended—and saw a living Jesus. These people had a depth to them beyond human capabilities. Jesus showed me much about His loving character, nature and power through them. I recognized He was the savior I needed—not just to save me out of homosexuality, but to heal my entire brokenness and sin. I invited Him into my life, and immediately knew that homosexuality was wrong. I was okay with that—I wanted to forsake whatever my Lord and Creator said was not right and good for me.

Jesus was the first man I trusted not to hurt me; I let Him love me. What an important step of healing! His love was pure, and I wanted to reflect that kind of love in all my relationships. So I had to allow Him to begin cleaning up my heart from judgments, contempt, hatred and unforgiveness toward men and myself. He replaced my envy with thankfulness for the unique male He had made me. I began seeking godly men within the Body of Christ as role models. Courage began to replace old fears as I embraced Christ's acceptance of me and His power living within me.

As I moved toward men for genuine relationship, I saw how very much alike we really were. The sense of acceptance between myself and them affirmed my masculinity and helped me develop as a man. It also gave me confidence that I was adequate because of Jesus. He had given me everything I needed to be a man.

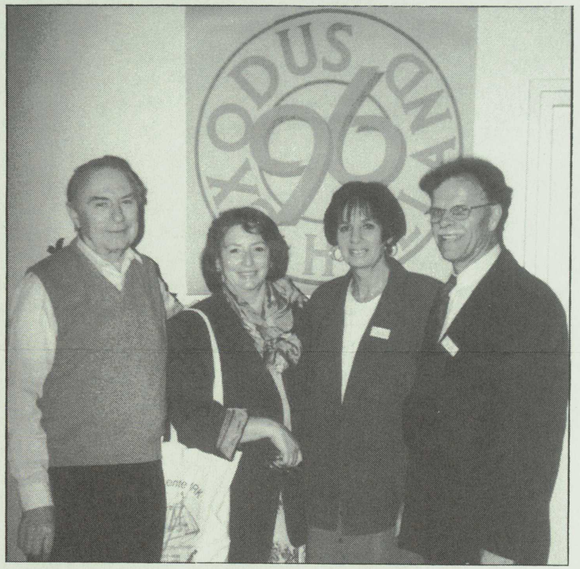
Out of this healing of my identity and new sense of fitting in with the world of men, I developed wonderful relationships with men and women, single and married. I grew into heterosexuality in both feelings and identity. I very much enjoyed being single.

Then I met Mia. I was attracted to a number of characteristics about her. We began our relationship as friends, then dated for over two years. By then we knew we had the basis for a successful marriage. We married six months later. We had a beautiful wedding, and our honeymoon was the best time we had yet experienced together in our relationship. I married into a wonderful family whose members know all about my past. And, of course, healing from my past continues to occur in the daily challenges of my marital relationship.

Most of my initial transformation occurred through taking my rightful place in the Body of Christ. It was after significant healing that I discovered Exodus and became involved. I am so grateful that the option of change was offered me with supportive people in the church. Above all, I am grateful to an all-powerful Father who loves me, "the God who gives life to the dead, and calls things that are not as though they were" (Romans 4:17). With His help, I'm continuing to grow into the man He created me to be. •

▶▶ *EXODUS EUROPE*

14 Nationalities At European Seminar



L–R: Frank and Anita Worthen at the Exodus International Europe conference with hosts Ankie and Johan van de Sluis.

URK, NETHERLANDS—Exodus International Europe held its annual conference April 29–May 3. The conference was sold out, with up to 170 people attending classes daily. Though there are currently just eight ministries in the Exodus International Europe network, 14 European nations were represented. Every class was translated into four languages (Dutch, English, French, Italian).

Topics addressed included pedophilia, the Church's responsibility to "ex-gays," the needs of family members, the ministry of healing, and sexuality in the Jewish tradition.

Frank and Anita Worthen (*New Hope Ministries;* San Rafael, CA) were the only non-European speakers. Frank spoke a powerful message to the general assembly the first day and had a full house for his workshop the next day. "As Frank gets older," Anita said, "he has more of a no-nonsense style that is not easy to take. But he was very well received."

Michael Newman of *Christian Coalition for Reconciliation* (Houston) was among the American delegates. "My attendance was a real answer to prayer, since the challenge to go had been proposed to me in 1987."

Mike speaks French and Spanish, and has been increasing foreign-language ministry in the past few years. "I prayed about meeting a Spaniard there, and met Pablo from Madrid—the first Spaniard ever to attend an Exodus Europe conference."

An Italian woman from last year's conference brought 11 friends with her this year. At one point, Anita found herself conversing through an interpreter with an Italian mother of a gay son. "The amazing thing is the struggle is the same, and God is the same," Anita said. "His truths work, no matter what language they are spoken in, when people submit to Him. He is not limited by culture, language, or programs." •

Negative "Spin" On Exodus International

NEW YORK—An article "exposing" Exodus International appeared in the June issue of *Spin,* a secular music magazine for youth. Reporter Elizabeth Gilbert visited last year's Exodus conference to write her article, entitled "Queer and Loathing."

But the article—written in overwhelmingly negative terms—has numerous errors. "Exodus International turned 20 years old last summer," Gilbert reported, "making it the same age as the psychiatric community's consensus that homosexuality is not a disorder." (Wrong. The APA decision occurred in 1973.)

"Does Exodus work?" she asked. "The movement has claimed a 70 percent 'success rate' in converting gays to straight." (Wrong again. We have never claimed any such rate of success. Nobody knows how "successful" Exodus ministries have been over the past 20 years.)

Perhaps the most bizarre statement in the article is this one: "Exodus teaches that men often become gay because the feminist movement has taught women to strip men of their God-given masculine power." (Wrong again. This strange idea has never been promoted by Exodus.)

Despite the negative slant, executive director Bob Davies was delighted with the exposure among today's secular youth. "This article, in a strange way, is an answer to prayer," he said. "We have been wanting people outside the Church to hear about Exodus and consider our message. Even though *Spin* tried to slam us, I have a feeling that many people will be contacting us for more information. It happens every time."

Pray that gay youth reading this *Spin* article will contact Exodus for information on leaving homosexuality. •

▶▶ *CALENDAR*

NOTE: Events marked by a (*) sponsored by Exodus referrals.

**July 13/Evanston, IL.* "Chaos, Crisis, Fragmentation, and Personal Identity." Transformed By Grace, 847/733-0511.

**July 19/Nashville.* "Why Some People Remain Trapped in Sexual Sin" lecture. Mastering Life Ministries, 615/885-9098.

• *July 22-27/Vancouver, BC.* "Living Waters" Training. Wellspring Ministries, 604/732-5577.

**July 27/Nashville.* "The Healing of Sexual Addiction." Mastering Life Ministries, 615/885-9098.

• *Aug. 8-11/Philadelphia.* Annual Courage (Roman Catholic) conference. Speakers include Andy Comiskey. 212/421-0426.

**Aug. 17/Houston.* "How to Minister Freedom from Homosexuality." Christian Coalition for Reconciliation, 713/465-7045.

**Aug. 23-24/Portland, OR.* "Healing the Homosexual," with Andy Comiskey. The Portland Fellowship, 503/235-6364.

• *Aug. 24/San Rafael, CA.* "Family and Friends Day." New Hope Ministries, 415/453-6475.

**Sept. 13-15/Falling Waters, WV.* Retreat with Clay and Mary McLean. Regeneration, 410/661-0284.

**Sept.14 & 21/Anaheim.* Basic Training for AIDS Ministry. Desert Stream/ARM, 714/779-6899.

• *Sept.-Oct./Mill Valley, CA.* AIDS Ministry Trainings. Golden Gate Seminary, 415/388-8080 ext. 203.